

Al-Mu'taqid Lī I'tiqād Ahl Al-Islam

By Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī

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Translated and Edited by Hail



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In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful.

Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds, and the final outcome belongs to the God-fearing. Blessings and peace be upon His Messenger Muḥammad, the master of the messengers and the seal of the prophets, and upon his family and his Companions—the good and the pure.

To proceed: this is a concise treatise on the principles of [scholastic] theology (*uṣūl al-kalām*). I have entitled it *al-Muʿtaqid* expressing the belief of the people of Islam. I seek God's assistance in bringing it to completion, for He is the One who grants success and aid.

Section on Existence (Faṣl fī al-Wujūd)

Everything that the intellect can conceive is, with respect to external reality (*al-khārij*), either necessary in existence (*wājib al-wujūd*), impossible in existence (*mumtaniʿ al-wujūd*), or possible in existence (*mumkin al-wujūd*).

For if a thing's very essence (*dhāt*) entails its existence in external reality, then it is necessary in itself (*wājib li-dhātihi*), and that is God—exalted is He. If its essence entails non-existence, then it is impossible, such as the conjunction of contradictories (*ijtimāʿ al-naqādayn*). And if its essence entails neither existence nor non-existence, then it is possible in itself (*mumkin li-dhātihi*), such as the heavens, the earth, and whatever lies between them. In each case the entailment (*iqṭidāʿ*) is intrinsic and essential; were it negated, the essence itself would be negated.

A possible being is either spatially extended (*mutaḥayyiz*), which is a substance (*jawhar*), or inhering in what is spatially extended, which is an accident (*ʿaraḍ*). Space (*ḥayyiz*) is the imagined void occupied by a thing, like the interior of a basin filled with water. Water is a substance. Substance is either divisible, in which case it is a natural body (*jism ṭabīʿī*), or indivisible, in which case it is the indivisible atom (*al-jawhar al-fard*). A body, therefore, is a substance receptive of the three dimensions. According to some of the Ahl al-Sunnah, it is a spatially extended substance capable of division; hence, what is composed of two indivisible atoms is a body.

The philosophers held that a body is a single continuous substance (*jawhar wāḥid muttaṣil*), composed of matter (*hayūlā*) and form (*ṣūra*), and divisible without limit.

They denied the existence of an indivisible part (*al-juzʾ alladhī lā yatajazzaʿ*), and claimed that within a body—such as water, for example—there exists something other than it which serves as the locus (*maḥall*) of corporeal form, the form being continuous by its essence, its relation to that locus being like the relation of dust to water.



We reply: we do not concede that what is continuous by its essence is something other than the body itself. Rather, it is matter (*mādda*) itself, which constitutes the reality of body, with the sole consideration that its parts are continuous.

Accidents are of two kinds. Some are specific to living beings, such as life (*ḥayāh*), a positive attribute (*ṣifa wujūdiyya*) by virtue of which it is valid to ascribe knowledge and power; such as the habitual intellect (*al-ʿaql bi-l-malaka*), which is the basis of moral responsibility (*manāṭ al-taklīf*), by which—when the senses are sound—one apprehends the necessity of the necessary, the possibility of the possible, and the impossibility of the impossible; and such as inner cognition (*al-dhikr al-naḥsī*), namely knowledge, belief, conjecture, doubt, and imagination.

Also among them is power (*qudra*), an attribute by which a living being is capable of acting or refraining from acting. Power exists prior to the act and is applicable to both contraries (*yaṣluḥ li-l-ḍiddayn*); whenever will (*irāda*) is joined to it with respect to one of them, that contrary occurs.

If it is objected that power is an accident that does not persist for two moments, we reply that it is possible in the first moment—otherwise it would not exist—and likewise in the second; otherwise, the possible would be rendered impossible. Moreover, this would entail the non-persistence of contracts.

If it is objected that persistence (*baqāʾ*) is an accident and that an accident does not inhere in another accident, we reply that this is refuted by speed and slowness, which inhere in motion (*ḥaraka*) that itself inheres in a body.

Whoever claims that power accompanies the act and is not applicable to both contraries intends by this complete causation (*al-ʿilla al-tāmma*).

Among accidents is also will (*irāda*), a positive attribute by which one side of a possible is given preponderance (*tarjīḥ*) over the other. It is distinct from appetite (*ishtiḥāʾ*), which is a natural inclination, and from command (*amr*), since command may exist without will—as in commanding a disbeliever to believe—and conversely, something may be willed without being commanded.

Also among accidents are pain (*alam*) and pleasure (*ladhdha*), both of which are impossible to attribute to God—exalted is He.

And likewise the five senses: smell, taste, touch, hearing, and sight.



Section on the Attributes of God, Exalted

The attributes of God—exalted is He—considered in a general manner, are either simple or composite.

The simple attributes are of three kinds:

1. **Real, positive attributes** (*ṣifāt wujūdiyya ḥaqīqiyya*), which are not relational with respect to another, such as existence, life, and power.
2. **Relational attributes** (*ṣifāt idāfiyya*), which are so by relation to another, such as lordship, providence, and being worshipped.
3. **Negative attributes** (*ṣifāt salbiyya*), such as His being independent (free of need), and His not being in time, place, or direction.

The positive attributes are called the attributes of generosity (*ṣifāt al-ikrām*), while the negative ones are called the attributes of majesty (*nuʿūt al-jalāl*).

The composite attributes are of several kinds:

1. Those composed of the real and the relational, such as His being knowing, willing, speaking, hearing, and seeing. These are positive attributes that include relation, since knowledge without an object of knowledge is impossible, and likewise the others.
2. Those composed of the real and the negative, such as His being eternal without beginning—meaning that He exists with no beginning to His existence; and everlasting without end—meaning that He exists with no end to His existence; and necessary in all respects; and one, in the sense that He has no partner.
3. Those composed of the relational and the negative, such as His being Possessor of Majesty and Generosity (*dhū al-jalāl wa-l-ikrām*), that is, the One characterized by greatness and generosity through all kinds of blessings: His majesty does not veil His beauty from His servants, nor does His beneficence withhold itself from them.
4. Or those composed of all three, such as His being Self-Subsisting (*al-Qayyūm*): one who exists such that others subsist through Him, while He Himself subsists through none other.

The philosophers held that the real attributes and necessity are relational and identical with the divine essence. Close to this is the view of the Muʿtazila, who say that He is living without life and knowing without knowledge—rather, by the essence itself. Al-Ashʿarī held that His existence is identical with His essence, while the other attributes are neither identical with it nor other than it, since “otherness” applies only to two essences, or to things that can in some respect be separated.



The verifying scholars (*al-muḥaqqiqūn*), however, hold that the attributes are other than the essence. This is because immediate intuition distinguishes between our saying “His essence” and our saying “His essence is knowing, powerful, and living.” Moreover, for any two things we posit: if the concept of one is identical to the concept of the other, then one is identical with the other; otherwise, it is other than it. “Otherness” here means difference in meaning, which is more general than difference in subsistence. This principle likewise applies in the discussion of the attributes.

Section on the Refutation of Circularity and Infinite Regress

As for circularity (*al-dawr*), it is invalid because self-evident reason decisively affirms the priority of the existence of a cause (*al-mu’aththir*) over the existence of its effect (*athar*). For that which does not exist cannot produce an effect. If a thing were to act upon its own cause, which is prior to it in existence, this would entail that the thing is prior in existence to that which is already prior to it. This, in turn, would require that the thing be prior to itself in existence in two distinct respects—an impossibility.

As for infinite regress (*al-tasalsul*), it is invalid because a series of possible beings (*mumkināt*) arranged in succession requires each individual member of the series. Each of them, therefore, is possible and in need of a cause (*sabab*). That cause cannot be the totality of the series itself, nor can it be something within it, since nothing can be a cause of itself or of its own causes. Rather, the cause must be an independent cause (*‘illa mustaqilla*) of the entire series, and thus something external to it.

What lies outside all possible beings cannot itself be possible; rather, it must be necessary (*wājib*). And that is what was to be established.

Section on Demonstrating the Necessary Existent, Exalted

There is no doubt about the existence of every originated thing (*ḥādith*), and every originated thing is **possible** (*mumkin*). Otherwise, it could not be non-existent at one time and existent at another. Every possible being requires a cause (*sabab*), for it is impossible that one of the two sides of a possible—existence or non-existence—should preponderate without a preponderating factor (*murajjih*).

That cause must either itself be **necessary** (*wājib*), or terminate in the Necessary Existent, in order to avert infinite regress (*daf’an li-l-tasalsul*).

Section on the Oneness of God, Exalted

The Necessary Existent (*al-wājib*) is one. For if we were to suppose two gods, and one of them were to will the motion of a body, then if it were possible for the other to will its rest, the situation admits of three possibilities: either both wills are realized, or neither is realized—and both are impossible; or the will of only one of them is realized, in which case the other is rendered incapable. If, on the other hand, it is not possible for the second to will rest, then the impediment is the will of the first, which again entails incapacity. And one who is incapable cannot be a god. This argument is known as the proof of mutual impediment (*dalīl al-tamānu*).

This proof, however, establishes only the negation of two gods who are simultaneously powerful and operative; it does not, by itself, negate the existence of two gods absolutely.

The proof of the philosophers (*al-ḥukamā*) is as follows: if the principle by which the Necessary Existent is individuated (*‘illat ta’ayyun al-wājib*) is His essence itself, then no other Necessary Existent can exist. And if it is something other than His essence, then the Necessary Existent would be in need of another in order to be determined as such—and this is impossible. Moreover, the latter assumption is more general and thus inadmissible.

It is also permissible to rely on transmitted evidence (*al-naql*), such as His saying—exalted is He—*“Know that there is no god but God.”* For the soundness of this proof depends on the truthfulness of the Messenger, and his truthfulness depends on the indication of the miracle of his truthfulness, not on the doctrine of divine unity itself. Thus, no circularity follows.

By this, the doctrines of the dualists are invalidated—those who posit light and darkness—as well as the doctrine of the Magians, who claim that good derives from Yazdān and evil from Ahriman; and likewise the doctrine of the Christians, who maintain that the Word united with Jesus—peace be upon him—and became a bodily locus for it, such that he consisted of two substances and two hypostases: divine and human. On this basis, they ascribe to him divine acts, such as reviving the dead and curing the blind from birth, as well as human acts, such as eating and drinking.

We reply: all of this constitutes miracles on his part. For turning a staff into a serpent is more astonishing than reviving the dead; likewise the bringing forth of the she-camel from stone, and the splitting [of natural orders]. And Ezekiel—peace be upon him—revived thousands more than that.

Section on the Manner in Which Action Proceeds

The Necessary Existent acts **by choice** (*bi-l-ikhtiyār*). For if He were necessitating by His essence (*mūjib bi-l-dhāt*), then His first effect would necessarily be either one or many, inseparable from Him and enduring with permanence.



This is because an effect that is necessary for a cause is itself enduring, and causal efficacy is unquestionably enduring. If the first effect were enduring, then the effect of that effect would likewise be enduring, and so too the effect of that—ad infinitum.

In that case, all originated things (*hawādith*) would be perpetual by virtue of the perpetuity of His essence—exalted is He—which is not the case, given the actual occurrence of originated things and the cessation of some of them. Otherwise, the non-existence of any originated thing would entail the non-existence of His essence—exalted is He—and that is impossible.

Section on Knowledge

The Necessary Existent is knowing (*‘ālim*). For one who acts by choice (*al-mukhtār*) cannot direct intention toward that which is unknown. When He wills to bring a thing into existence, He necessarily knows the reality of what He wills to bring into existence; and when He wills the persistence of an existing thing, He knows that very existent itself. Thus, He is knowing of the realities and determinate identities of existents. The realities are universals, while the determinate identities are particulars.

Accordingly, He—glorified and exalted—is knowing of universals and particulars alike, whether they are existents or objects of knowledge. Moreover, His acts are executed with consummate order and precision, such as the configuration of the celestial spheres, the sun, the moon, and the stars, the diversity of their colors and their motions; likewise the human body, with the marvels of its structure and the wonders of its functions.

Everyone whose act is executed with such precision is knowing. For whoever sees a finely written script knows with certainty that the writer is knowledgeable of the craft of writing.

Section on Will

A voluntary act (*al-fi‘l al-ikhtiyārī*) is preceded by five things: knowledge, power, will, intention, and bringing-into-existence—with life as the condition for all of them. For what is not known cannot be intended, and what is not willed cannot be done. Knowledge precedes will; power precedes intention; intention precedes bringing-into-existence.

Sometimes, in addition to these five, there is also a motive (*dā‘iya*), consisting in a kind of priority or preference, which arises between knowledge and will. For choosing one of two alternatives may occur due to a motive, or it may occur without one. This is because it is known that an agent who chooses may choose something without a preponderating factor (*murajjih*), such as a hungry person choosing one of two identical loaves of bread.



Will (*al-irāda*) is a positive attribute (*ṣifa wujūdiyya*), relational in nature, subsisting in God—exalted is He—such that God, in pre-eternity, wills the bringing into existence of an originated thing (*ḥādith*) at a particular time; and when that time arrives, He brings it into existence.

The precedence of some of God's acts over others—despite the equal possibility of delay—requires a preponderating factor. This factor cannot be power, since its relation to all times is equal; nor speech, since the relation of the command “Be” (*kun*) to them is uniform; nor knowledge, since it follows the object known; nor hearing and sight, since they are likewise dependent. Therefore, it must be another attribute, namely will.

The Necessary Existent wills all existents. For the one who acts by choice, if he wills the bringing into existence of something, then he brings it into existence in accordance with what he knows, and thus he is willing with respect to it. Moreover, God wills that the servant perform either of two acts—obedience or disobedience—by the servant's own power and will; otherwise, the creation of these capacities in the servant would be pointless, which is impossible for the All-Wise. Accordingly, the acts of servants are also willed. The Mu'tazila, however, hold that He wills only some acts—namely faith and obedience—but not disbelief and disobedience, since what is commanded is willed; and it has already been established that action proceeds from will.

Section on Life, Subsistence, Hearing, and Sight

Life (*ḥayāh*) is an attribute by virtue of which it is valid to ascribe knowledge and power to an essence; otherwise, the living would not be distinguished from the inanimate.

Subsistence (*baqā'*) is an attribute subsisting in the divine essence by which it is truly said of Him that He endures. It is the continuance of existence. It is known that the continuance of God's existence—exalted is He—is a positive reality, distinct from His essence, since it occurs in possible beings as well. If it is objected that, were He subsistent by virtue of a subsistence other than His essence, He would be necessary through another, we reply that there is no impossibility in one attribute depending upon another attribute that arises from the essence.

As for hearing (*sam'*) and sight (*baṣar*), their reality consists in the apprehension of the very entity of the heard and the seen at the moment of their occurrence. It has already been established that He—exalted is He—is knowing of all objects of knowledge in their determinate identities and apprehends them all; accordingly, He is hearing and seeing.

If it is objected that hearing and sight are realized through sensory organs and by being affected by sensibles—such that sight occurs through the reception of the form of the visible in the eye, and hearing through the arrival of air bearing sound to the auditory canal—we reply that what is essential is the apprehension of the very entity of the heard and the seen whenever such apprehension occurs, and this notion is more general.



Section on Bringing-into-Existence

Bringing-into-existence (*al-takwīn*)—as well as creation (*al-khalq*), origination (*al-ijād*), and production ex nihilo (*al-ikhtirā*)—are one and the same in meaning. It consists in bringing the possible (*al-mumkin*) from non-existence into existence.

It is distinct from power (*al-quḍra*), since power precedes it; and also because God—exalted is He—is capable of creating a thousand suns and moons in this world, yet He has not created them. Thus, power may be present without actual creation.

It is also distinct from the created thing itself. For we say, “This created thing exists because God—exalted is He—created it,” meaning that its existence is consequent upon God’s act of bringing it into existence. If *bringing-into-existence* were identical with *the created thing*, then the statement “It exists because God created it” would be equivalent to “It exists by itself,” which is impossible.

Section on the Necessary Existent as Speaker

The Necessary Existent is speaker (*mutakallim*), by means of an eternal speech subsisting in His essence—exalted is He. This is termed inner speech (*al-kalām al-naḥsī*). What is expressed outwardly from it is sensory / articulated speech (*al-kalām al-ḥissī*).

The difference between knowledge and inner speech is that speech occurs when one intends to address—either oneself or another—whereas knowledge, were it itself an intention, would amount to speech.

Gabriel—peace be upon him—heard it because God—exalted is He—created in him the hearing of His speech, and enabled him to express it; or else He created writing in the Preserved Tablet, which Gabriel then read and descended with.

If it is objected that command, prohibition, assertion, inquiry, and calling without an addressee are impossible—and that God reports using the past tense, as in His saying, “*When We sent Noah to his people*”—and that if His speech were eternal this would entail falsehood, We reply that God—exalted is He—is transcendent beyond time. For Him there is no past or future; rather, all times are equal in relation to Him. Pastness applies only relative to the temporal position of the addressee. Thus, He addresses each people in accordance with their time and circumstance.

According to the majority of the Ahl al-sunnah, God’s speech comprises five categories: command, prohibition, assertion, inquiry, and calling.

Some of the Ash‘arīs—including the Imām—held that all of these reduce to assertion. ‘Abd Allāh held that divine speech is one and not any of these in itself, but becomes one of them over time according to differing relations and contexts.

This view was rejected on the grounds that, in language and convention, speech is that for which expressions are originally coined—not what they may imply indirectly through interpretation and consideration. Otherwise, this would apply even to assertions, and confidence in promise and threat would thereby be undermined. Moreover, assertion admits of truth and falsehood and has an external correlate, unlike the others.

The view of ‘Abd Allāh is extremely remote, for no speech is intelligible apart from these five categories, and what is shared cannot be abstracted from all of its instances.

Section on the Vision of God, Exalted

The vision of God—exalted is He—is possible without modality (*bilā kayf*). This is because vision is the apprehension of the very entity of what is seen. God’s knowledge of His own existent essence, and of others, is by way of presence and immediate witnessing; therefore, His existent essence—transcendent beyond corporeality and direction—is receptive of being seen. Receptivity does not differ here, since it is essential; and the relation of the essence to all is uniform. Accordingly, it is receptive with respect to our vision.

This is also indicated by His saying—exalted is He—“*Faces on that Day shall be radiant, looking toward their Lord*”; and by the saying of the Prophet—peace be upon him—“*You shall see your Lord as you see the full moon on a clear night; you will not be crowded or hindered in seeing Him.*”

The Mu‘tazila adduced as evidence His saying—exalted is He—“*Vision does not grasp Him*”, arguing that the definite article with the plural (*al-abṣār*) conveys universality, and thus no vision of the genus “visions” can see Him.

Our response is that what is negated is the grasping of vision with its customary power and manner. Speech is to be understood according to what is actually and conventionally operative, not according to conditions that arise thereafter.

Section on the Remaining Attributes

Some held that there are no attributes beyond eight: knowledge, power, will, life, hearing, sight, speech, and—eighth—creation.

Those who affirm additional attributes also affirm subsistence (*baqā’*). The remaining attributes, according to them, either reduce to these, or fall under the relational attributes, or the negative attributes.

They also claimed that existence is identical with the divine essence, and they said that love is the will to reward, and mercy is His beneficence toward servants—both of which revert to relational attributes.



Al-Ash'arī held that love is the will to bestow beneficence, and that contentment (*ridā'*) is the will to honor the believers. If, however, contentment is interpreted as the absence of objection, then it is a negative attribute. Anger is the will to exact retribution and to inflict punishment, while hatred and enmity are the will to abase and to punish.

As for face, it denotes the essence; likewise existence. Hand [generally] denotes power, and the two hands denote the two powers of origination and production.

Al-Ash'arī, however, affirmed hand as an attribute distinct from power, and face as an attribute beyond existence, and likewise establishment (*istiwā'*), without specifying its modality.

The Qāḍī affirmed perception through smell, taste, and touch. If by this he intended knowledge of these objects, then it is correct; but if he intended apprehension of their very entities, then it is not.

Abū Sahl held that for every object of knowledge there is a distinct knowledge, and for every object of power a distinct power.

And God—exalted is He—knows best.

Section on Divine Transcendence

God's essence—exalted is He—is unlike all other essences, and is unknowable to us in itself. For His attributes do not constitute His reality, nor is His essence composite, since composition would entail need for parts. Nor does any originated attribute subsist in His essence, because His attributes are attributes of perfection. If an attribute of perfection were originated, its absence would have obtained prior to its occurrence, which would entail deficiency in the essence—and that is impossible.

The origination of His acts with respect to originated things does not entail that originated things subsist in His essence. Likewise with His being knowing, and His being hearing and seeing. For God's action in things is by the command "*Be*" (*kun*) at such-and-such a moment, and nothing more. When that moment arrives, it occurs—not as a single act of one of us.

Likewise His knowledge: He knows an originated thing as existent at a particular time, and this is eternally established without any change. Likewise His being hearing and seeing with respect to originated things. It has already been established that hearing and sight consist in the apprehension of the very entity of what is heard and seen at the time of its presence. God—exalted is He—apprehends the very entities of things at their respective times; thus, He is hearing and seeing without change. For things are present at their times, and He apprehends each thing at its own time and not at another.



The Necessary Existent cannot become possible, nor can the possible become necessary; nor does He unite with anything else. Otherwise, a single accident would subsist in two substrates at one time, which is impossible.

Nor does He inhere in anything else. For if indwelling (*ḥulūl*) were an attribute of perfection, this would entail His attaining perfection through another; otherwise, it must be negated.

He is not spatially extended, nor a body, nor in a direction; nor does He possess form, time, or place.

As for His saying—exalted is He—*“The hand of God is above their hands,”* and *“The All-Merciful established Himself upon the Throne,”* and *“There remains the face of your Lord,”* and *“Your Lord came,”* and likewise *“God created Adam upon His image,”* and reports that He laughs toward His saints—these are subject either to interpretation or to consigning the meaning to God.

Interpretation (*taʿwīl*): the Throne signifies dominion, as in the expression *“the throne of so-and-so,”* meaning his sovereignty. It is said, *“He attained a throne unattained by jinn, humans, or lands.”* The All-Merciful is the One whose dominion is established and never ceases. As for the eye, it signifies oversight.

Or else one consigns the meaning (*tafwīḍ*), for *“none knows its interpretation except God.”* And the correct position is to withhold judgment (*al-waḳf*).

Section on the Comprehensiveness of God’s Power

The Necessary Existent is powerful over all possible things (*qādir ʿalā jamīʿ al-maḳdūrāt*), and the existence of all created things, as well as the continuance of their existence, occurs by the power and will of God—exalted is He. For either no one besides God has any effect whatsoever—whether by power or by nature—or else they do. If none besides Him has any effect, then all things occur solely by the power of God. And if others do have an effect, then that effect too occurs by His power, because the capacity of every possible agent to have an effect is itself among the possible things, and thus comes to be by God’s power in creating that capacity within it.

Both substance and accident, in their persistence, are in need of a sustaining factor—either from the outset or thereafter—whether by God’s creating the sustaining capacity within the substrate, or by His sustaining it after its subsistence.

It is therefore known that everything other than God—exalted is He—is in need of Him with respect to all that it possesses of powers and other attributes, both in coming to be and in remaining. Consequently, the efficacy of God’s power is never interrupted at any moment from the efficacy of any agent, and whatever issues forth also does so by the power of God. For the agent who enables an agent to act is, in truth, the agent with respect to the effect at the moment of its occurrence. Thus it is known that all things occur by the power of God—exalted is He.



The Ash'arīs, when they departed from this by denying secondary causes, held that acts occur merely by custom (*'āda*): satiety is created after eating, and quenching of thirst after drinking.

The weakness of this view is evident rationally, since it is necessary knowledge that eating and drinking are conducive to satiety and quenching. It is also refuted by transmitted evidence, for both reason and revelation testify to it: the revealed scriptures and the reports of the prophets—peace be upon them—frequently mention causes and entrust the welfare of servants to the managers of affairs. Indeed, this entails an increase in divine power and wisdom, for the creation of a cause entails two powers and two wisdoms: the creation of the cause itself, and the creation of its power to have an effect, together with the ordering of existence and the outpouring of beneficence.

So blessed is God, the best of creators.

Section on the Acts of Servants

Al-Ash'arī held that the servant's power has no causal efficacy whatsoever; rather, the effective cause of the servant's power and acts is God's power—exalted is He—this being compulsion (*jabr*). This is because an act depends on a preponderating factor (*murajjih*), which is created by God—exalted is He. Moreover, if the servant were to bring about his own act, he would necessarily be aware of its details; yet he is not conscious of the parts of a motion, their number, or their manner in terms of speed and slowness.

We reply: general awareness suffices; or else we are aware but do not notice it due to its passing away, or it does not remain in memory.

They also adduce His saying—exalted is He—“*God created you and what you do,*” “*Creator of all things,*” and “*God has sealed their hearts.*”

We reply: even if the act proceeds by the servant's power, that power itself is grounded in the power of God—exalted is He. Hence, it is valid to ascribe all acts to God.

The Mu'tazila said that the servant is the creator of his own acts, for we distinguish between the movement of a healthy person and that of one who trembles involuntarily: the former moves when he wills, unlike the latter. This, they say, is what is meant by an act occurring through the servant's power.

We reply: this does not entail that the servant is independent in bringing his act into existence. Rather, his power has an effect only insofar as it draws upon the effect of God's power, due to its dependence upon Him for existence and persistence. Thus, the effect of God's power cannot be negated absolutely.



If it is objected that a possible being, once in the state of persistence, has no need of an agent—otherwise this would amount to the acquisition of what is already acquired—we reply that the agent has an effect with respect to the persistence that occurs in the second moment, since it did not exist in that moment previously; thus, it is an effect with respect to something new. Moreover, were the servant compelled, commands and prohibitions, praise and blame would be morally repugnant—yet they are not—hence the servant is a chooser.

This is also supported by His saying—exalted is He—“*Do whatever you wish,*” and “*What prevented you from prostrating?*”—and by numerous other verses.

You have already learned that the servant’s power has a role to play; hence these meanings are valid. Al-Ash‘arī explained this by saying that the servant is an agent and an acquirer (*muktasib*): when he intends the act, God brings it about by the customary course (*bi-ijrā’ al-‘āda*). The essence of the act is by God’s power, while its being an act of obedience or disobedience pertains to the servant through the direction of motions toward it. This suffices for attributing the act to the servant and for the validity of moral responsibility.

We reply: if the servant were independent in bringing something into existence and directing it, that would entail absolute delegation (*tafwīḍ*); if not, it would entail compulsion, and intention itself is an act—so acquisition (*kasb*) would be of no avail.

The truth is that the act occurs through both powers. Its explanation is as follows: the servant’s power consists in the soundness of the instrument, the state, or the capacity—its existence and persistence depending on the effect and creation of God’s power—exalted is He; likewise his will and awareness. Thus, the effect issuing from the servant’s power issues from God’s power as the effect of a cause through its cause. Insofar as the effect issues through the servant’s power and in accordance with his will, it is attributed to him; and insofar as it issues through the primary causation of God’s power, it is attributed to God. Viewed from the first aspect, attribution to God is correct; viewed from the second, attribution to the servant is correct. Hence, the efficacy of the servant’s power and choice is real, and its attribution to God’s power is also real. The effect is complete through both—this is the truth.

This has been transmitted from Ja‘far al-Šādiq and his noble descendants, and it was heard from Abū Ḥanīfa—may God have mercy on him—and it is the doctrine of the firmly grounded: neither compulsion nor absolute delegation (*lā jabr wa-lā tafwīḍ*).

Section on the Names of God, Exalted

The name (*ism*) is not identical with the named (*musammā*), for names are multiple while the named is one.



A name is assigned either to the reality itself, or to a part of it, or to an attribute of it, or to something composed of these—such as the “indivisible substance.” The second and the fourth are impossible with respect to God—exalted is He—while the remaining two are permissible.

As for the first, the expression “God” (*Allāh ta‘ālā*) is a proper name for the Necessary Essence; it is not derived, for if it were derived it would be the name of an attribute. As for the third, it may be derived from an eternal attribute subsisting in His essence—such as *the Powerful* and *the Knowing*—and such a name is likewise eternal; or it may be derived from an act that is not eternal, or from the act of another—such as *the One worshipped* or *the One thanked*—and such a name is not eternal.

It is also permissible to apply pronouns and indeterminate expressions, such as “who,” “what,” and “where.”

There occur in the Qur’ān names in excess of ninety-nine, such as *Raiser of degrees*, *Acceptor of repentance*, and *Severe in punishment*.

The names of God are determined by revelation (*tawqīfiyya*), not by analogical reasoning. For He is described by specific names, but not by every term that shares their meaning. Thus, one may say of Him *Generous*, *Knowing*, and *Merciful*, but one does not say *liberal*, *excellent*, or *tender-hearted*. However, He may be described by what is derived from those meanings, as in His saying, “*Their Lord gave them to drink*.” Likewise, He may be described by actions, but He is not described by the name “*the one who gives drink*.”

Section on the Origination of the World

The world (*al-‘ālam*) is the name for everything that exists other than God—exalted is He—and His attributes. It is confined to bodies, their parts, their spirits, and their accidents. It is originated (*ḥādith*) in its very essence and in its attributes, because it depends upon an agent who acts by choice (*al-fā‘il al-mukhtār*). The act of one who chooses is preceded by intention and will, for one does not intend to bring into existence what already exists, but rather intends to bring into existence what is non-existent. Consequently, the effect of such an agent must itself be originated. It therefore follows necessarily that the world is originated.

If it is objected that time is eternal—otherwise there would have been a prior time in which time itself came to be—and that time is the measure of the motion of the celestial sphere, which would entail the eternity of motion and the eternity of the sphere,

we reply: time is itself part of the world. For if there were time prior to the world, there would have been a body prior to the world. In that case, the world would no longer be the name for everything that exists besides God—which is false.



Section on Prophethood

A prophet (*nabī*) is a human being whom God—exalted is He—sends to the servants in order to convey what He has revealed to him. A messenger (*rasūl*) is one who brings a law initially, or who abrogates some rulings of a preceding law. Thus, prophethood is more general than messengership.

Prophethood is established by three matters:

1. The manifestation of a miracle (*muʿjiza*), which is an occurrence that breaks customary norms, admits of no counteraction, and is accompanied by a challenge, serving as a confirmation of the claimant. We say “occurrence” because a miracle may consist either in bringing about something contrary to custom, or in preventing what customarily occurs—such as preventing fire from burning. We stipulate “absence of counteraction” to exclude magic and sleight of hand; and “accompanied by challenge” to exclude saintly marvels (*karāmāt*). An *irhāṣ* is a sign indicating the impending mission of a prophet prior to his commissioning—such as the light on the forehead of ‘Abd Allāh—or miracles that occurred before the Prophet’s mission—peace be upon him—serving as confirmation of his prophethood. We also stipulate that the miracle confirm the claimant, so as to exclude a wondrous event that disproves him—such as a lifeless object speaking, or a dead person being revived, only to declare that the claimant is lying.
2. That he not claim what manifest reason rejects, such as saying, “The Necessary Existent is more than one.”
3. That his call be to the refinement of character, to obedience to God—exalted is He—and to avoidance of disobedience to Him.

Once this is understood, we say: the sending of prophets is true, for it is known by mass-transmitted report (*tawātur*) that manifest miracles and clear signs occurred at the hands of past prophets—may God’s blessings be upon them all.

Moreover, the sending of prophets is required by wisdom (*ḥikma*). The absence of prophethood would conflict with the demands of wisdom—not in the sense that it is obligatory upon God Himself, as the Muʿtazila held, nor in the sense that it is impossible, as the Ashʿarīs denied—but rather in that it accords with divine wisdom.



Section on the Prophethood of Our Prophet Muḥammad, Peace Be upon Him

[It is established] that he is the Messenger of God—exalted is He—and that he is endowed with miracles. This is because he challenged the eloquent to produce the like of it, and they proved incapable of doing so, despite the availability of strong motives for them to do so—namely, safeguarding themselves, their religion, their children, and their property.

Moreover, it is known by mass-transmitted report (*tawātur*) that he claimed prophethood and brought forth the Qur’ān. Hence, he is a messenger.

There have also been transmitted from him—peace be upon him—[other miracles], such as the splitting of the moon; the greeting of stones to him; water flowing forth from between his fingers; the moaning of the wooden trunk; the complaint of the she-camel; and the testimony of the roasted sheep. Likewise [there are] his reports concerning unseen matters accompanied by accuracy, and his character, actions, and conduct.

He was sent to all humankind and jinn alike, for he challenged all of them, as indicated by His saying—exalted is He—“*Say: If mankind and jinn were to gather to produce the like of this Qur’ān, they could not produce its like, even if they supported one another.*”

Those who acknowledge that he was a prophet but restrict his mission to the Arabs are thereby compelled to admit the universality of his prophethood, since they thereby affirm the truth of His saying—exalted is He—“*O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of God to you all.*”

Prior to the descent of revelation upon him, he was not following the law of any prophet.

Muḥammad—may God’s blessings be upon him and grant him peace—is the **Seal of the Prophets**, for prophethood was completed with him. God—exalted is He—said, “*the Seal of the Prophets*,” which is an explicit and unequivocal text indicating the finality and completion of prophethood through him.

Jesus—peace be upon him—is among those who were prophets before him, and he will descend [at the end of time] upon Muḥammad’s law and toward his direction of prayer, as though he were one of his community.

His religion is the best of religions, and his community is the best of communities.



Section on the Infallibility of the Prophets

The prophets—peace and blessings be upon them—after their commissioning are infallible (maʿṣūmūn) from deliberately lying in matters of religious rulings, since the miracle indicates their truthfulness; and [they are infallible] from unbelief and from grave sins (kabāʾir), namely those regarding which the Lawgiver has issued severe threats.

Likewise, they are infallible from minor sins that entail baseness or contempt, such as cheating by a single grain, stealing a single morsel, and the like; such acts are likewise impermissible for them deliberately.

However, it is permissible that such things occur from them unintentionally—whether through inadvertence, forgetfulness, error, confusion, or the omission of what is preferable (tark al-awlā).

Infallibility is a dispositional quality of the soul (malaka nafsāniyya) such that, with it, acts of disobedience do not issue from its possessor, despite the presence of the capacity to commit them.

Section on the Superiority of the Prophets over the Angels

The prophets—peace be upon them—are superior to the angels. This is because they possess spiritual perfections like those of the angels, and, in addition, corporeal perfections beyond them. Moreover, their obedience is more arduous, for it is performed in the presence of impediments; hence, the prophets are superior. This is also indicated by His saying—exalted is He—“Indeed, God chose Adam, Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of ʿImrān over all the worlds.”

An angel (malak) is a subtle body, luminous and of divine origin, transparent, capable of assuming various forms—whether celestial or terrestrial. The terrestrial [among them] are the righteous of the jinn; their wicked are called devils (shayāṭīn).

Section on the Superiority of Our Prophet over the Other Prophets

Our Prophet—peace be upon him—is **the best of the prophets**, peace be upon them all. This is because God—exalted is He—described them with praiseworthy qualities and then commanded him to follow them, saying: “*So by their guidance follow.*” It necessarily follows that he embodied their guidance; and if he embodied all of their virtuous qualities, then what was distributed among them was gathered together in him. Accordingly, he is superior to them.

It has been said: “*It is not beyond God—exalted is He— to gather the world within a single person.*”



Moreover, God—exalted is He—has exalted his mention, for his name is coupled with God’s name in the call to prayer, the testimony of faith, the tashahhud, and elsewhere. This distinction was not granted to any other prophet—peace and blessings be upon them all.

Section on the Ascension (al-Mi‘rāj)

The Ascension of the Prophet—peace be upon him—with his physical person and in a state of wakefulness is true.

As for [the journey] from Mecca to Jerusalem, this is established by His saying—exalted is He—*“Glory be to Him who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose surroundings We have blessed.”* The term “servant” (‘abd) denotes the complete person; had it been otherwise, it would not have been said, *“He carried His servant by night,”* but rather something indicating the soul alone.

As for [the ascent] from there to the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary (*Sidrat al-Muntahā*), this is established by His saying—exalted is He—*“And indeed he saw him another time, at the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary,”* meaning that Muḥammad truly saw Gabriel in a second, real vision.

The Mu‘tazila claimed that this was a vision during sleep, on the grounds that the ascent of a heavy body to the heavens is inconceivable, as is motion at such extreme speed. We reply: God—exalted is He—raised Jesus—peace be upon him—to Himself; and the one who possessed knowledge brought the throne of Bīlqīs from the farthest reaches of Yemen in the blink of an eye. Thus, motion at such speed is possible.

It is also said that the disc of the sun exceeds the globe of the earth by one hundred and sixty times, yet it completes its course in an hour and a half. Likewise, a horse at full gallop raises and sets its hooves rapidly; and the outermost celestial sphere traverses three thousand farsakhs. It is thereby established that the motion of a heavy body at such speed does in fact occur.

Section on the Superiority of the Prophet over the Saint

The prophet is superior to the saint (*walī*), even though the saint is near to God—exalted is He—by virtue of His grace and mercy. This is because the prophet—peace be upon him—is perfect and perfecting, whereas the saint does not become perfected except through him.

This is also indicated by his saying—peace be upon him—*“By God, the sun has neither risen nor set upon anyone, after the prophets and messengers, better than Abū Bakr,”* may God be pleased with him. This indicates that Abū Bakr is superior to everyone who is not a prophet, and inferior only to those who are prophets.



As for al-Khidr—peace be upon him—the majority hold that he was a prophet, and a prophet is superior to a saint. If he were not a prophet, then if he was among the Children of Israel and from the community of Moses—peace be upon him—he would not be superior to him; and if he were not from them, then likewise [he would not be superior], in view of His saying—exalted is He—*“And I favored you over all the worlds.”*

Whatever issues from a saint in the way of breaking customary norms is called a saintly marvel (*karāma*), such as the stories of ‘Umar and Sāriya, ‘Alī, and Khālid. These are extraordinary occurrences without challenge or deception; by this criterion, magic and sleight of hand are excluded.

That which issues by way of gradual enticement (*istidrāj*), such as [what occurred with] Pharaoh—when the Nile would flow when his horse moved and would stop when it stopped—or what issues from some common people out of affection is called assistance (*ma‘ūna*); among the wicked it is called [deception]; and from the Antichrist (*al-Dajjāl*) and others like him at the end of time [it is likewise of this kind].

Magic (*siḥr*) and the evil eye (*‘ayn*) are real.

Section on the States of the Resurrection

All are agreed that the Resurrection (*ḥaṣhr*) is real. However, most theologians held that it is bodily only, based on the view that the soul is the body itself, or something inhering within it—namely, the essential parts.

The philosophers held that it is spiritual; the materialists (*al-dahriyya*) denied both; Galen suspended judgment. Many Muslims, and most Christians, held that the soul is a luminous, celestial body inhabiting the physical body, apprehending universals and particulars, independent of nourishment, free from dissolution and growth, and referred to by every person when he says “I.”

According to this view, God—exalted is He—will restore the very same original body and return the soul to it. Others held that God annihilates the body and then recreates it, which some rejected.

The Ash‘arīs said that the parts are dispersed and then reassembled. The Mu‘tazila said that when a thing ceases to exist, its specific quiddity remains; thus, upon return, God grants it existence again, based on their principle that the nonexistent is a thing.

The truth is that the reinstatement of both soul and body is possible.

As for the soul, this is because after the body’s decay it remains, experiencing bliss or misery, as indicated by His saying—exalted is He—*“Rather, they are alive with their Lord, provided for, rejoicing,”* and *“O tranquil soul, return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing.”*



The Prophet—peace be upon him—said: *“When the deceased is carried upon his bier, the soul hovers above it, saying: ‘O my family, O my children, let not the world deceive you as it deceived me. I gathered wealth from lawful and unlawful means, then left it for others; the burden is upon me, so beware lest what befell me befall you.’”*

As for the body, this is because it is possible in itself, God—exalted is He—is powerful over it, and the truthful one has informed us of it—therefore it is true.

That it is possible follows because what has ceased to exist remains receptive to the existence that once belonged to it; otherwise, it would never have existed at all. Receptivity is intrinsic to it, and thus it remains perpetually receptive.

That God is powerful follows because He—exalted is He—is knowing of all things and powerful over all things; thus, He is able to bring bodies into existence again, restore souls to them, and unite the two.

We said *“the truthful one has informed us”* because the prophets—peace be upon them—were in agreement on this matter, with the exception of Moses—peace be upon him—regarding what was revealed to him.

In the Gospel, it is stated that the righteous will become like angels on the Day of Resurrection, possessing eternal life and everlasting felicity. This may be interpreted as referring to spiritual resurrection, bodily resurrection, or both; and this is the view of most Christians.

In the Qur’ān likewise there are statements such as: *“Who will revive the bones when they are decayed? Say: He who created them the first time shall revive them, and He is knowing of every creation,”* and *“On the Day the earth will split open for them as they rush forth—this gathering is easy for Us,”* and *“Does he not know when what is in the graves is scattered?”* and *“Yes, indeed, We are able to fashion even his fingertips,”* and *“They will say to their skins, ‘Why did you testify against us?’”*

As for the materialists, they claimed that the soul is merely a mixture, held that the nonexistent cannot be restored, and denied resurrection altogether.

The metaphysicians, while agreeing with them on denying bodily resurrection, nevertheless affirmed spiritual resurrection on the grounds that the soul becomes immaterial after the body’s destruction. By this they meant the severing of the soul’s attachment to the body, since its attachment constitutes a descent from its spiritual realm.

The advocates of transmigration (*tanāsukh*) held that when the soul separates from one body it attaches to another. They called its attachment to a human body *reincarnation*, to an animal *metamorphosis*, to a plant *transmutation*, and to a mineral *fixation*.



They claimed that humans were originally created in the most perfect form and the most blissful state, free from need, toil, and incapacity; then envy, hostility, and conflict arose, and their souls were cast into bodies according to merit as punishment. The soul continues to circulate until it is disciplined and returns to its original state—this, they claim, is resurrection.

We reply: if our souls had inhabited bodies before ours, we would remember some of our previous states, just as one remembers having lived in one town before another. For the locus of knowledge and memory is the soul, and it remains the same, while bodies are alike in temperament and equally receptive to the soul's attachment.

Section on the Remaining Matters Known by Revelation

All of these matters are possible, and God—exalted is He—is powerful over all things. The truthful one has informed us of them; therefore, they are true.

As for the punishment of the grave, this is indicated by His saying—exalted is He—*“The Fire: they are exposed to it morning and evening.”* It may occur either to the soul alone or together with the body, in that God—exalted is He—produces by His power an effect for which the body is once again disposed, through a renewed relation with the soul, as in the state of life, though without the animal soul. Thus, pain is apprehended.

As for the Bridge (al-Şirāt), this is indicated by His saying—exalted is He—*“Indeed, Hell lies in ambush.”* It is a bridge proportionate to deeds, over which creation will pass.

As for the Balance (al-Mīzān), this is indicated by His saying—exalted is He—*“And We shall set up the just balances for the Day of Resurrection.”* It has two pans and a tongue that speaks; deeds and records are weighed by it.

As for the speaking of the limbs, this is indicated by His saying—exalted is He—*“Their hands will speak to Us.”* The occurrence of speech from inanimate things is possible.

Likewise, the conditions of Paradise and Hell—that there are rivers therein, and fruits present near them—are not only possible but established. Paradise contains gardens of delight and radiant orchards through which rivers flow; likewise, there are pure spouses and beautiful youths. And Hell contains blazing fires, fetters, and chains.

If it is objected that the elemental body does not endure, whereas reward and punishment are everlasting—so how can there be perpetual burning?

We reply: the persistence of bodies is affirmed among them through the cohesion of their elements, as in gold and talc.



Thus, it is possible that God—exalted is He—grant the elements and temperament of the body a cohesion such that it neither disintegrates nor transforms into fiery elements, and that He restore it in this manner continually.

If it is objected: what benefit is there in creating Paradise and Hell now, before entry into them? We reply: decisive texts indicate this, such as *“At it is the Garden of Refuge,”* by the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary; likewise, the settling of Adam—peace be upon him—in Paradise and his expulsion from it. Moreover, God’s customary practice in creating originated things is that they increase in beauty and perfection with the passage of time, as seen in human beings, plants, and animals; and likewise the Fire increases in hideousness and severity.

Section on Reward for Acts of Obedience

Reward for acts of obedience is obligatory by virtue of God’s promise, because it is impossible for Him to go back on His word—not in the sense asserted by the Mu‘tazila, who held it to be obligatory upon His essence.

The Ash‘arīs denied obligation in this sense, holding instead that reward is pure grace and punishment is justice, while deeds are merely signs. This view is refuted by texts of recompense, such as His saying—exalted is He—*“And companions with wide eyes, like hidden pearls, as a recompense for what they used to do.”* Recompense (*jazā*) signifies requital.

Abū Ḥanīfa—may God have mercy on him—said: if a servant works solely for his master, then he deserves no wage; but if he works for God—exalted is He—then he is entitled to reward.

As for punishment for major and minor sins, we do not state definitively either forgiveness or punishment. Abū Ḥanīfa said: we hope and we fear—but fear predominates with respect to major sins, and hope predominates with respect to minor sins, in view of His saying—exalted is He—*“Indeed, God does not forgive that partners be associated with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills.”*

The Mu‘tazila held that punishment for major sins prior to repentance is obligatory, citing verses of threat, otherwise God would be going back on His warning.

We reply: those verses are specified by the verses of pardon and forgiveness.

The Murji’a held that there is absolutely no punishment for the believer, giving precedence to the verses of promise. This is false in light of His saying—exalted is He—*“Whoever does an atom’s weight of evil shall see it.”* Nevertheless, forgiveness predominates over punishment by God’s grace and acceptance of repentance. The effect of intercession multiplies this further, and the weight of good deeds is multiplied without limit, while evil deeds may be transformed into good ones.



Section on the One Who Commits a Major Sin

The one who commits a major sin (*ṣāhib al-kabīra*) is a believer in God—exalted is He—yet disobedient by virtue of that sin. According to the Mu‘tazila, he occupies a position between unbelief and faith; according to the Khārijites, he is an unbeliever, citing His saying—exalted is He—*“Whoever does not judge by what God has sent down—those are the unbelievers.”*

We reply: this verse applies to one who does not judge by what God has sent down while denying it. Moreover, their claim is refuted by His saying—exalted is He—*“Whoever does an atom’s weight of good shall see it.”* He will not see it except after deliverance from the Fire—contrary to the Mu‘tazila—despite His saying—exalted is He—*“Indeed, the wicked are in Hell.”*

We reply: what is meant by *“the wicked”* here are the unbelievers.

As for His saying—exalted is He—*“Whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell,”* we reply: this establishes entitlement to punishment, not its necessary occurrence.

There is consensus that the threat against the obstinate unbeliever is everlasting. As for one who exerted utmost effort in ijtihād yet failed to reach the truth, al-Ash‘arī held that he is hoped to be forgiven; al-Jāhīz and al-‘Anbarī held that his punishment, if any, is temporary; while the majority rejected both views.

Section on Pardon and Intercession

As for pardon (*‘afw*), this is indicated by His saying—exalted is He—*“He is the One who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons evil deeds, and He pardons much.”* Pardon is realized by the waiving of deserved punishment.

The Mu‘tazila denied pardon for minor sins before repentance and for major sins after repentance, thereby entailing that pardon would occur only prior to repentance—an untenable position.

As for intercession (*shafā‘a*), this is indicated by His saying—exalted is He—*“So the intercession of the intercessors will not benefit them.”* Were intercession restricted to unbelievers alone, singling them out would serve no purpose. It is also indicated by the saying of the Prophet—peace be upon him—*“My intercession is for those among my community who commit major sins.”*

This refutes their claim that intercession is merely a request for increased benefit for those already entitled to reward, and that it has no effect in lifting punishment. For in customary usage, intercession denotes seeking pardon and remission on behalf of another. What they interpret as mere assistance would entail that our prayers upon the Prophet—peace be upon him—constitute intercession in this technical sense, which is not the case.



Moreover, intercession necessarily presupposes a higher rank on the part of the intercessor, as indicated by His saying—exalted is He—“*And no intercessor will be obeyed,*” and by His saying—exalted is He—“*No close friendship and no intercession.*” These verses are to be understood in accordance with the qualifications stated above.

Section on Faith, Submission, and Unbelief

Faith (*īmān*) is affirmation of the Messenger with the heart concerning that which is necessarily known to have come from him.

According to the early generations (*al-salaf*), faith consists of affirmation, verbal profession, and action; this is also the view of al-Shāfiʿī—may God have mercy on him. According to the Muʿtazila, faith is the totality of these together with abstention from prohibited acts.

As for submission (*islām*), it is compliance; and in the legal sense, humble surrender and acceptance of the Messenger’s message. If submission is joined with affirmation, then it is faith; otherwise, submission is more general than faith.

Unbelief (*kufṛ*) literally means covering or concealing; in the legal sense, it is denial of what is necessarily known to have been brought by the Messenger. For this reason, it is not permitted to declare the People of the Qibla unbelievers over matters of juristic disagreement (*ijtihādiyyāt*).

Transgression (*fisq*) is departure from obedience to God—exalted is He—while retaining faith. Hypocrisy (*nifāq*) is outward display of faith while concealing unbelief.

There is no intermediate state between faith and unbelief—except if faith is interpreted as the totality of acts of obedience. For in that case, one who affirms yet neglects some acts would be neither believer nor unbeliever. This is what the Muʿtazila termed “the intermediate position between two positions” (*al-manzila bayna al-manzilatayn*).

The Khārijites, however, held that whoever abandons any part of it is an unbeliever; thus, in their view, there is no intermediate position at all.

The proof that action is not a constituent part of faith is that the locus of faith is the heart, whereas actions are not among the acts of the heart. Moreover, one who affirms and then dies before performing any act of obedience dies as a believer—by consensus. Likewise, action and abstention are mentioned alongside faith [in revelation], indicating distinction rather than identity.

Section on Whether Faith Increases and Decreases

Those who hold that faith is affirmation (*taṣdīq*) differ. Some say that it neither increases nor decreases, because the referent of faith is a single thing that does not admit of gradation.



Others say that it increases but does not decrease, citing His saying—exalted is He—“*And when His verses are recited to them, it increases them only in faith and submission,*” and “*that they may increase in faith.*”

Those who maintain that action is included within faith hold that it both increases and decreases, citing scriptural evidence to that effect.

The correct position is that faith admits of increase and decrease, whether faith is understood in terms of action or affirmation. For affirmation is firm belief; and so long as it has not reached complete certainty, it is susceptible to strength and weakness. This is precisely what they have affirmed with respect to the faith of the imitator (*īmān al-muqallid*).

Section on the Faith of the Imitator

Whoever affirms the pillars of religion by imitation (*taqlid*) is a believer, though he is sinful for abandoning rational inquiry (*naẓar*).

Al-Ash‘arī, however, held that faith is not valid except through rational inquiry, whether or not one is able to articulate it properly.

Imitation is the acceptance of another’s statement without proof.

Whoever has not received the call of Islam: if he affirms divine oneness and justice, he is excused with respect to legal accountability; if he affirms associationism or negation [of divine attributes], he is an unbeliever; and if he affirms neither oneness nor unbelief, then he is neither believer nor unbeliever.

Section on Moral Good and Evil (al-Ḥusn wa-l-Qubḥ)

All the acts of God—exalted is He—are good, either in themselves or relative to others; there is no evil in them, nor in our acts insofar as they are those to which moral obligation is attached.

Good (*ḥasan*) is that for which praise is due upon being done, whether by reason or by law. Evil (*qabīḥ*) is that for which blame is due.

Goodness and evil may belong to an act in itself or by virtue of an accompanying attribute. They are also known by reason, although among them are those which reason apprehends independently—such as the goodness of justice and the evil of injustice—and others which are not apprehended except through revelation, such as the goodness of fasting on a day of Ramaḍān and the evil of fasting on the first day of Shawwāl, after the advent of revelation.



Al-Ash'arī held that the good is whatever God commands and the evil whatever He forbids, since the act of the servant is in reality the act of God—exalted is He—and thus no evil can be ascribed to Him.

We reply: if goodness were determined solely by revelation, then anything whatsoever would be good on God's part—including the manifestation of miracles at the hands of a liar. In that case, it would be impossible, prior to establishing prophethood, to judge that lying on God's behalf is impossible; and consequently, trust in prophethood, promise, and threat would be undermined.

Section on Whether God's Acts Are Purposeful (Mu'allala) or Not

God's acts and rulings are **purposeful**, attending to the welfare of His servants. For the act of one who is wise is never devoid of purpose; otherwise, it would entail frivolity. This is also indicated by His saying—exalted is He—*"I did not create jinn and mankind except that they may worship Me,"* and *"They were commanded only to worship God."* How could it be otherwise, when there is no disagreement that the sending of prophets—peace be upon them—was for the guidance of creation, the establishment of proof against them, and the manifestation of miracles to confirm them? Whoever denies purposiveness thereby denies prophethood.

If it is objected that if God acts for a purpose, then if that purpose is eternal, His act must also be eternal—since it would motivate the act—and otherwise an infinite regress would ensue, we reply: His acting is for a purpose that returns to **Himself**, not to something external to Him.

If it is objected that purpose consists either in attaining pleasure or averting pain—and that God—exalted is He—is able to obtain both immediately, so mediation would be pointless—we reply: such acts also contain **another wisdom**, such as the obligation of almsgiving, which establishes entitlement to reward.

Section on Charging What Is Beyond One's Capacity

Charging someone with what is beyond his capacity (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*) is impossible, because it would be pointless. This is indicated by His saying—exalted is He—*"God does not burden any soul except according to its capacity,"* and *"He has not placed upon you any hardship in religion."*

Al-Ash'arī and a group [of theologians] held that God—exalted is He—commanded Abū Jahl to believe while knowing that he would not believe; thus faith on his part would be impossible, for otherwise God's knowledge would be turned into ignorance.

We reply: his not believing was by his own choice; and in that case, belief remained within his capacity.



They also cite His saying—exalted is He—*“It is the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe,”* despite His having commanded belief.

We reply: information follows the thing informed about, for it reports what has occurred or will occur; and what is dependent cannot be a preventing factor.

They also argue that obligation occurs before the act or at the moment of the act; thus, if there is no power before it, and power is required at the moment of the act, the act would not be within one’s capacity.

We reply: it has already been established that **power precedes the act** and has an effect with respect to it. Hence, the act is indeed within one’s capacity.

Section on the Imamate

The Imamate is a general leadership in religious and worldly affairs, not by a claim to prophethood. This definition excludes the judiciary and kingship; what is meant is the caliphate. The appointment of an imam is obligatory upon the community by revelation, because appointing him entails the prevention of harm to persons, and preventing harm is obligatory by the consensus of the prophets—peace be upon them—as far as possible; hence, it is obligatory.

The Imāmiyya and the Ismā‘īliyya held that the imamate is obligatory upon God by reason, considering it a divine لطف (beneficence) in urging obedience and deterring disobedience. We reply: as an obligation upon His essence, we do not concede this; but as an implication of His wisdom and mercy, it is not far-fetched. For the imamate, outward justice suffices.

The imamate is established either by explicit designation by God and His Messenger, or by a prior imam through an independent ground of designation; or else when the community gives allegiance to a person qualified for it; or when someone seizes authority over the polity of Islam while possessing the requisite power—even if he is immoral or ignorant—for in both cases the imamate is realized insofar as exhortation and restraint are achieved thereby.

The Zaydiyya hold that any Fāṭimid who is learned and pious, who rises by the sword and claims the imamate, becomes an imam. The Imāmiyya reject both [community allegiance and seizure of power], arguing that through dissimulation (taqiyya) each faction might pledge allegiance to someone, leading to discord, and claiming that the imam is the deputy of God and His Messenger—peace be upon him—so a definitive designation is necessary.

We reply: this difficulty is averted by giving precedence to the most learned and most pious, the one closest to the Prophet—peace be upon him—, and by the community’s choice of such a person; or by the emergence of effective power that reveals him to be a legitimate deputy. Thus, the matter is resolved for the community.



Section on the Obligation of Holding a Sound Belief Regarding All the Companions

The correct position is that holding a sound and respectful belief regarding all the Companions is obligatory, in light of His saying—exalted is He—*“And the foremost, the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who followed them with excellence—God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him.”* Moreover, the abundance of transmitted reports praising them—collectively and individually—is well known.

The most virtuous of the Companions are the Rightly Guided Caliphs—may God be pleased with them all. Indeed, both the office of leadership and those deemed upright by God—exalted is He—gave precedence to al-Ṣiddīq al-Akbar; thus his superiority is established. Then comes ‘Umar al-Fārūq, then ‘Uthmān Dhū al-Nūrayn, and then ‘Alī al-Murtaḍā—may God be pleased with them all. Consensus has been firmly established upon this order, and it constitutes decisive proof.

The Prophet—peace be upon him—said: *“The caliphate after me will last thirty years.”* This period was completed with ‘Alī: two years for Abū Bakr, ten for ‘Umar, twelve for ‘Uthmān, and six for ‘Alī. He is thus the final one of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

Section on the Superiority of the Companions

The most virtuous of the Companions after the Messenger of God—peace be upon him—are Abū Bakr, then ‘Umar, then ‘Uthmān, then ‘Alī—may God be pleased with them all—contrary to the Shi‘a, who hold that ‘Alī is the most virtuous.

The correct position is that each of the caliphs—and indeed all the Companions—are honored by God and characterized by virtues and praiseworthy traits, for the Prophet—peace be upon him—praised and favored them. He said: *“God chose my Companions over all creation except the prophets and messengers; and He chose from among my Companions four and made them the best of my Companions: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī,”* may God be pleased with them. He also said: *“My Companions are like the stars; whichever of them you follow, you will be rightly guided.”*

Accordingly, it is impermissible to impugn them, for such an attack is in reality an attack upon the Messenger himself, and it leads to unbelief.

Whatever conflicts occurred among them are to be understood as the result of their independent reasoning (ijtihād), and they are not to be weighed against the abundant reports transmitted concerning their merits and virtues. May God benefit us through love for them all.



It is permissible for a less virtuous person to hold leadership over a more virtuous one if this leads to less discord or to greater realization of communal interests—as even the Shi‘a concede. On this basis, the leadership of each of the Rightly Guided Caliphs is valid.

It is also permissible to have two imams if the territories are so distant that the authority of one cannot reach the other within a feasible time.

This is the end of the book. All praise belongs to God, the Bestower.

